AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims

What is claimed is:

1.   (Currently Amended) A method for determining a bidding strategy for a plurality of marketing options, the method comprising:

facilitating, by a computing device having a processor and a memory, prior to placing one or more bids among the marketing options, specification of one or morea plurality of models that model one or more performance metrics for a the plurality of marketing options based at least in part on a plurality of positions occupied by the marketing options in a selected one of on-line query answer sets and contextual advertisements, wherein the plurality of positions occupied by the marketing options are responsive to monetary resources allocated to the one or more bids placed among the marketing options; and

determining, by thea computing device, prior to placing the one or more bids, a bidding strategy for the plurality of marketing options, the bidding strategy directing allocation of monetary resources to place the one or more bids among the plurality of marketing options, wherein determining includes quantitatively finding an optimal solution forby solving an objective function using the specified one or more models, the objective function being one of maximizing clicks to information associated with a product or a service or maximizing revenue of a product or a service, the objective function having variables associated with the allocation of monetary resources for the one or more bids; and

after determining the bidding strategy, the computing device generating a report to report on the determined bidding strategy for use to allocate monetary resources to place the one or more bids among the marketing options.

2.   (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 1, wherein the method further comprises facilitating a user, by the computing device, in creating the plurality of models.

3. (Original) The method according to claim 1, wherein the models comprise click models for the marketing options that forecast number of clicks for the marketing options for the various positions.

4. (Original) The method according to claim 1, wherein the models comprise revenue models for the marketing options that forecast revenues for the marketing options based on click conversions.

5. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the on-line query answer sets comprises on-line query answer sets of different search engines.

6. (Cancelled)

7. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 1, wherein ~~said solving comprises solving an~~the object~~ive~~ function ~~selected from~~is further one of a group of objective functions including~~:~~
    a first objective function to maximize number of clicks for the marketing options, and
    a second objective function to minimize average cost per click for the marketing options.

8. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 7, wherein the group of objective functions further include at least one of:
    a third objective function to minimize the average cost per customer for the products or services of the marketing options,
    a fourth objective function to maximize revenue for the products or services of the marketing options,
    a fifth objective function to maximize profit for the products or services of the marketing options;
    a sixth objective function to minimize marketing expenses for the marketing options; and
    a seventh objective function to maximize a number of increases in customer sign-ups or registrations for products or services of the marketing options.

9.   (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 1, wherein said ~~solving~~ finding an optimal solution for the objective function comprises ~~solving~~ finding an optimal solution for the objective function subject to one or more constraints.

10.   (Original) The method according to claim 9, wherein the one or more constraints include a constraint requiring a traffic level for a URL for a period of time.

11.   (Original) The method according to claim 9, wherein the one or more constraints include a constraint requiring a marketing option to be at a selected one of a particular on-line query answer set position, and a particular contextual advertisement position.

12.   (Original) The method according to claim 9, wherein the one or more constraints include at least one of a constraint requiring a cost limit for average cost per customer, a constraint requiring a cost limit for the marketing options, and a constraint requiring a limit on an amount of revenue generated by products or services of the marketing options.

13.   (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 1, wherein the method further comprises facilitating submission of a bidding for the plurality of marketing options, by the computing device, for the positions for the plurality of marketing options based at least in part on the determined bidding strategy.

14.   (Currently Amended) An article of manufacture comprising:
       a computer readable storage medium; and
       a plurality of executable instructions stored therein, and designed to program a computing device to enable the computing device, in response to execution of the instructions, to:
              facilitate, prior to placing one or more bids among a plurality of marketing options, specification of ~~a plurality of~~ one or more models that model one or more performance metrics for ~~a~~ the plurality of marketing options based at least in part on a plurality of positions occupied by the marketing options in a selected one of on-line

query answer sets and contextual advertisements, wherein the plurality of positions occupied by the marketing options are responsive to the monetary resources allocated to the one or more bids placed among the marketing options, ~~and~~

determine, prior to placing the one or more bids, a bidding strategy for ~~the plurality of marketing options, the bidding strategy~~ directing allocation of monetary resources to place the one or more bids among the plurality of marketing options, wherein determining includes quantitatively finding an optimal solution for~~by solving~~ an objective function using the ~~plurality of~~specified one or more models, the objective function being one of maximizing clicks to information associated with a product or a service or maximizing revenue of a product or a service, the objective function having variables associated with the allocation of monetary resources for the one or more bids; and

after determining the bidding strategy, generate a report to report on the determined bidding strategy for use to allocate monetary resources to place the one or more bids among the marketing options.

15.   (Previously Presented) The article of manufacture according to claim 14, wherein the models comprise click models for the marketing options that forecast number of clicks for the marketing options for the various positions.

16.   (Previously Presented) The article of manufacture according to claim 14, wherein the models comprise revenue models for the marketing options that forecast revenues for the marketing options based on click conversions.

17.   (Previously Presented) The article of manufacture according to claim 14, wherein the on-line query answer sets comprise on-line query answer sets of different search engines.

18.-19. (Cancelled)

20.   (Currently Amended) An apparatus, comprising:

a storage medium having stored therein programming instructions designed to enable the apparatus to~~:~~

facilitate, prior to placing one or more bids among a plurality of marketing options, specification of ~~a plurality of~~one or more models that model one or more performance metrics for ~~a~~ the plurality of marketing options based at least in part on a plurality of positions occupied by the marketing options in a selected one of on-line query answer sets and contextual advertisements, wherein the plurality of positions occupied by the marketing options are responsive to the monetary resources allocated to the one or more bids placed among the marketing options;~~and~~

determine, prior to placing the one or more bids, a bidding strategy for ~~the plurality of marketing options, the bidding strategy~~ directing allocation of monetary resources to place the one or more bids among the marketing options, wherein determining includes quantitatively finding an optimal solution for~~by solving~~ an objective function, using the ~~plurality of~~specified one or more models, the objective function being one of maximizing clicks to information associated with a product or a service or maximizing revenue of a product or a service, the objective function having variables associated with the allocation of monetary resources for the one or more bids; and

after determining the bidding strategy, generate a report to report on the determined bidding strategy for use to allocate monetary resources to place the one or more bids among the marketing options; and

at least one processor coupled to the apparatus to execute the instructions.

21.   (Original) The apparatus according to claim 20, wherein the models comprise click models for the marketing options that forecast number of clicks for the marketing options for the various positions.

22.   (Original) The apparatus according to claim 20, wherein the models comprise revenue models for the marketing options that forecast revenues for the marketing options based on click conversions.

23.   (Original) The apparatus according to claim 20, wherein the on-line query answer sets comprise on-line query answer sets of different search engines.

24.   (Cancelled)

25.   (Previously Presented) The apparatus according to claim 20, wherein the instructions are further designed to enable the apparatus to bid for the positions for the plurality of marketing options based at least in part on the determined bidding strategy.

26.   (Previously Presented) The article according to claim 14, wherein the instructions are further designed to enable the computing device to bid for the positions for the plurality of marketing options based at least in part on the determined bidding strategy.

27.   (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 1, further comprising creating by the computing device, at least one model out of the plurality of models by:
        receiving by the computing device, empirical data for a plurality of performance metrics for a plurality of purchased marketing option; and
        constructing the model, by the computing device, using the empirical data.

28.   (New) The method according to claim 14, wherein said finding an optimal solution for the objective function comprises finding an optimal solution for the objective function subject to one or more constraints.

29.   (New) The method according to claim 20, wherein said finding an optimal solution for the objective function comprises finding an optimal solution for the objective function subject to one or more constraints.